

9 subsequently querying said queried agents a second time whether the
10 queried agent considers at least part of said subject message to be in the
11 queried agent's domain of responsibility;

12 resolving any conflicting responses from said queried agents to identify
13 a prevailing one of said downchain agents to whom at least part of said subject
14 message should be passed; and

15 instructing said prevailing agent to handle at least part of said subject
16 message.

1 12. A method according to claim 11, wherein said prevailing agent
2 is a community of agents.

1 13. A method according to claim 11, further comprising the steps of
2 a first one of said queried agents, in response to one of said queries:

3 determining whether at least part of said subject message is within said
4 first agent's local domain of responsibility;

5 and where at least part of said subject message is within said first
6 agent's local domain of responsibility, returning a response to said originating
7 agent claiming at least part of said subject message.

1 14. A method according to claim 11, further comprising the steps of
2 a first one of said queried agents, in response to one of said queries:

3 determining whether at least part of said subject message is within said
4 first agent's local domain of responsibility;

5 and where said subject message is not within said first agent's local
6 domain of responsibility and said first agent has no further downchain agents,
7 returning a response to said originating agent disclaiming said subject
8 message.

1 15. A method according to claim 11, further comprising the steps of
2 a first one of said queried agents, in response to one of said queries:

3 determining whether at least part of said subject message is within said
4 first agent's local domain of responsibility;

5 and where said subject message is not within said first agent's local
6 domain of responsibility but said first agent has further agents downchain of
7 said first agent, querying at least one of said further agents whether the further
8 agent considers at least part of said subject message to be in the further agent's
9 domain of responsibility.

1 16. A method according to claim 11, wherein said step of querying
2 a first time comprises the step of providing to each of said queried agents a
3 first depth-of-search indication for said subject message,

4 and wherein said step of querying a second time comprises the step of
5 providing to each of said queried agents a second depth-of-search indication
6 for said subject message, said second depth-of-search indication indicating a
7 deeper search than said first depth-of-search indication.

1 17. A method according to claim 11, further comprising the steps of
2 a first one of said queried agents:

3 determining in response to said first query whether at least part of said
4 subject message is within said first agent's local domain of responsibility;

5 where at least part of said subject message is within said first agent's
6 local domain of responsibility, returning a response to said originating agent
7 claiming at least part of said subject message; and

8 where said subject message is not within said first agent's local domain
9 of responsibility but said first agent has further agents downchain of said first
10 agent, querying in response to said second query at least one of said further
11 agents whether the further agent considers at least part of said subject message
12 to be in the further agent's domain of responsibility.

